

Don't Run With Scissors!

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Safety Communiqué from the Technical Division Head



By: Giorgio Apollinari, Technical Division Head

Complacency is extremely dangerous in our workplace. When we get used to things being “the way they have always been”, we no longer really take notice of our surroundings. We can underestimate the risk of tasks that we perform regularly or fail to notice a change in our environment when we have become complacent in our daily routine.

An accident rarely happens at the moment of the incident. More often, there were a series of steps (or mis-steps) leading up to that moment. Someone made a decision to do (or not do) something, such as not putting an item away properly or doing something they were not trained to do. All of these factors can ultimately lead to an incident. A different decision/action at any point in that process might have prevented the incident.

Our environment can change at any moment – a cup of coffee could be spilled; a piece of equipment could break; a cord could be pulled into a walkway. It is the responsibility of every employee to stay aware of everything going on in his or her surroundings and to pay attention wherever you are.

In addition, each employee (floor managers and supervisors in particular) should be actively surveying their work environment for hazards that may have been overlooked. It's all too easy to live with a temporary solution that isn't really an appropriate long term solution and unfortunately sometimes incidents result when stop gap measures are taken to solve a problem. In addition, we sometimes get complacent about clutter in our workplaces, such as boxes that might block entrance to a cabinet. Removing these hazards and looking for long term, safer solutions, will help us keep Fermilab a safer place to work.

INCIDENT BACKGROUND	HOW IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED
An employee exiting their car at the beginning of workday mis-stepped on an uneven surface (the edge where the blacktop met gravel). The employee fell to their hands and knees, causing a contusion to the left knee and right eye, the latter being hit by a coffee mug being held in their hand.	Fortunately this was only a first aid injury. The area has subsequently been filled in with gravel to remove the uneven surface. This incident points out the need to be cognizant of your surroundings at all times, and to take note of even the small hazards. Furthermore, when hazards around your building are recognized, they should be reported to the Building Manager.
While reaching around an I-beam to disconnect an airline hose, an employee struck their head on a C-clamp attached to the I-beam, causing a small laceration. The C-clamp had been attached at this location for use as a “hook” for the airline hose.	The C-clamp was at head height for a taller person like the injured employee. C-clamps are not an appropriate hook for air line hoses or similar use. At other nearby locations around the production floor where air line hoses are used, hooks made of flat iron have been fabricated and attached to the I-beams. The C-clamp was removed after this incident. Additionally, the employee reached around behind the I-beam from a tight location, when he could have gone around to the other side of the I-beam, which was less congested, to disconnect the air hose.

Most safety experts believe that all accidents can be prevented. As you can see by the prevention column, a little extra care and attention on the part of the individuals might have avoided these accidents from occurring.